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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Items 21 (b), 38, 41, 97 (a), (c), (d) and (e), 98 and 101 (b) of the preliminary list*
STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE AND CONSOLIDATE NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION: TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT; INTEGRATION OF THE ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION INTO THE WORLD ECONOMY; INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION; AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
AGENDA FOR DEVELOPMENT: RENEWAL OF THE DIALOGUE ON STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Note verbale dated 11 July 1996 from the Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations has the honour to request that the annexed Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly

* A/51/50.

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Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans, adopted at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe, held at Sofia, on 6 and 7 July 1996 (see annex I), as well as the address by H.E. Mr. Jean Videnov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria to the participants in the meeting (see annex II) and the Chairman's summary (see annex III) be issued as an official document of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, under the items 21 (b), 38, 41, 97 (a), (c), (d) and (e), 98 and 101 (b), of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

ANNEX I

Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans, adopted at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe, held at Sofia, on 6 and 7 July 1996

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs and heads of delegations of countries of South-Eastern Europe met at Sofia on 6 and 7 July 1996. Ministers Theodor Melescanu, Milan Milutinovic, Theodoros Pangalos, Gueorgui Pirinski, Under-Secretary Onur Oymen, Deputy-Ministers Dr. Hasan Dervishbegovic and Arian Starova attended.

Representatives of Austria, as Chairman-in-Office of the Central European Initiative (CEI); Croatia; France; Germany; Hungary; Ireland, as Presidency of the European Union (EU); Italy; Russian Federation, also in its capacity of Chairman of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC); Slovenia; Switzerland, as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; the High Representative Carl Bildt, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Daniel Tarschys, representatives of the United Nations, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the European Community (EC), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank also attended.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Jean Videnov, addressed the meeting.

Messages to the meeting were received from Russian President Boris Yeltsin, United States President William Clinton, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, French Prime Minister Alain Jupé, President of EC Jacques Santer, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSCE) Region Evgueni Primakov, Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman-in-Office of the Central European Initiative (CEI) Wolfgang Schüssel.

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs convened their meeting at a time of crucial importance for the future of the region. Time has come for a new beginning of inter-State relations between the countries of the region and for developing a comprehensive multilateral cooperation. They pointed out that as a result of the profound changes in Europe, which started in 1989, the principles of democracy and market economy, respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms and the rule of law have become common values. With peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a window of historic opportunity opens to fulfil the hopes and expectations of their peoples to live in lasting peace and prosperity.

The Ministers pointed out that multilateral cooperation in the Balkans has its pre-history and traditions. The meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the Balkan countries in Belgrade in 1988 and in Tirana in 1990 indicated substantial interest and introduced prospects to engage in a broad range of activities in the political, economic and humanitarian fields.

Taking into consideration positive past experience and new developments, the Ministers committed themselves that every effort shall be made to transform the region into an area of stability, security and cooperation in line with the general developments throughout Europe. These endeavours are aimed at contributing to the construction of a new Europe - a Europe of democracy, peace, unity and stability, thus enabling all nations in the region to live together in peace with each other as good neighbours.

The Ministers agreed to launch a comprehensive process of multilateral cooperation in the following areas:

- Enhancing good-neighbourly relations including confidence- and security-building measures;

- Development of economic cooperation through cross-border cooperation, upgrading transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructures, trade and investment promotion;

- Development of humanitarian, social and cultural contacts;

- Cooperation in the field of justice, the combating of organized crime, illicit drug and arms trafficking and the elimination of terrorism.

The Ministers stressed the importance of the improvement of multilateral political dialogue and cooperation at all levels and on all issues of common interest. They took note of the idea to establish a consultative assembly of the parliaments of the participating States.

The Ministers considered the prospects for multilateral cooperation in European perspective and as deriving from the common aspirations of each country of the region to integrate into Europe. In this connection they expressed their readiness to interact with other initiatives for regional cooperation in South-Eastern Europe with mutually reinforcing effect, stressing particularly the significance of the initiative of the European Union as well as the South-East European Cooperative Initiative. They also stated their willingness to develop cooperation on matters of common interest with the countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative.

ENHANCING STABILITY, SECURITY AND GOOD-NEIGHBOURLINESS

Good-neighbourly relations

The Ministers pointed out that lasting good-neighbourly relations between the countries of the region based on universally recognized principles of inter-State relations set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter for a New Europe, are indispensable prerequisites for promoting the comprehensive process of multilateral cooperation. In this respect they expressed their determination to respect and put into practice all 10 principles - sovereign equality, respect for rights inherent in sovereignty, refraining from the threat of use of force, inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity of States, peaceful settlement

of disputes, non-interference in internal affairs, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, cooperation among States, fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law. They stressed that all principles apply equally and unreservedly, each of them being interpreted taking into account the others. They focused on the importance of implementing General Assembly resolutions 48/84 B and 50/80 B on developing of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States.

They also expressed support to the ongoing process of full normalization of the relations between the countries of the former Yugoslavia and the favourable conditions it creates for promoting good-neighbourly relations.

Confidence- and security-building measures

The Ministers shared the view that confidence- and security-building measures are of particular importance for enhancing peace and stability in the Balkans.

They stressed the significance of bilateral confidence- and security-building measure agreements signed so far, complementary to the Vienna Document 1994.

They agreed on the need for exploring the potential for developing confidence- and security-building measures with a regional scope of application.

They expressed support for a meeting of the Ministers of Defence of the Balkan States to be held at Sofia.

Overall implementation of the peace agreement

The Ministers stressed the importance of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina for enhancing stability and security in the region and the need for its full and strict implementation by the signatory parties. They confirmed the willingness of their respective countries to contribute to the consolidation of the peace process in all its aspects. They shared the view that multilateral cooperation in the Balkans will effectively contribute to the success of the peace implementation process. They expressed their understanding that constructive joint efforts by both the international community and the countries of the region, give new prospects for solving unsettled issues and differences and for transforming this part of Europe into a region of lasting peace and cooperation.

The Ministers emphasized that rapid reconstruction and economic recovery, with equal respect for interests and needs of all parties, is of prime importance for the lasting peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Ministers stressed the importance of holding the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the deadline set in the peace agreement. Free and

democratic elections represent a foundation of bodies and institutions, rebuilding confidence and common life in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Ministers commended the signing of the Agreement on the Subregional Arms Control in Florence on 14 June 1996, which they assessed as a major contribution to the implementation of the Dayton Agreement and the strengthening of the peace process.

They stressed that the countries of the region have the potential to contribute to the success of the economic reconstruction through appropriate arrangements.

DEVELOPING MULTILATERAL REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The Ministers noted the existing potential for developing multilateral economic cooperation, despite the difficulties of economic transition or post-conflict reconstruction that various countries of the region are facing today. They emphasized the importance of accelerated development of regional economic cooperation for achieving lasting stability in the whole region. Efforts should be made for introducing European norms and standards in the field of production, investment, transfer of technologies, financing and trade with the objective of integrating most of the economies of their countries into the European economy.

Cross-border cooperation

The Ministers agreed to promote the development of cross-border cooperation on a bilateral and multilateral basis in the framework of the relevant EU programmes, including the elaboration of a regional programme for its development with the assistance of EU and other international organizations and institutions. Such a programme will be directed towards the implementation of projects for improving border infrastructure, including road and railway communications with the border-crossing points, opening new border-check points, promotion of cross-border trade and tourism, protection of the environment. This cooperation will be developed on three different levels: State to State; region to region; people to people. The Ministers recommended to hold a meeting of the aid coordinators from their countries to analyse the state of implementation of existing programmes, identify priority projects of trans-regional dimension, identify the national contributions of the different countries and elaborate new joint projects to be submitted for possible financing to the European Community.

Transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructure

The Ministers stressed the necessity of accelerated infrastructure development in the region as an important factor for trade expansion, economic growth, as well as for overall regional stability. They reaffirmed the readiness of their countries to upgrade and modernize the transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructure in the region in interaction with

the countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative.

To this end they expressed their support for setting up a Trans-regional Centre for Transport Infrastructure in Sofia.

They also stressed the importance of the meeting of the Ministers of Transport of the BSEC participating States and the countries of CEI, which will be held in November 1996, according to the decisions of the BSEC Ministerial Meeting in Bucharest. They focused on the importance of the European Crete corridors passing through the region. They agreed to work jointly with the EU, G-24 and ECE on the issues of infrastructure development, attracting investments and integrating the region in the Trans-European Networks.

The Ministers also noted the importance of developing the transport infrastructure of the region and expressed their appreciation to the relevant ECE agreements; harmonizing the transport legislation of the countries of the region with EU legislation in that field, facilitating transport operations on bilateral basis, etc.

The Ministers took note of the idea for the establishment of a Balkan Agency for Transport Safety, which would be based on the European policy of integration and harmonization of the system of flight control.

The development of cooperation in the field of telecommunications and postal services, was defined as encouraging, as well as the steps to set up a Telecommunications coordination committee, a Balkan Postal Pool and other initiatives, undertaken at the April 1996 meeting of the Ministers of the Balkan countries responsible for posts and telecommunications.

Promotion of trade and investments

The Ministers discussed questions related to the promotion of trade and investment. They recommended the elaboration of measures for further trade facilitation, harmonizing of trade practices and in general encouraging regional trade.

The Ministers agreed to improve customs authorities cooperation through the conclusion of relevant agreements in order to establish more efficient customs clearance procedures. They also noted that a positive contribution to further promotion of regional cooperation could be the conclusion of bilateral agreements on free trade areas in conformity with EU regulations as applicable, and in line with the provisions of the World Trade Organization's agreements.

The Ministers agreed to support the activities of the Association of the Balkan Chambers of Commerce as an important venue for promoting the common interests of the business community in the region to expand and liberalize trade and for economic cooperation. The idea of creating a Regional Centre for Trade Promotion in one of the participating countries, to analyse trade policies in view of their harmonization and further liberalization was supported.

The Ministers confirmed the necessity for joint efforts aimed at creating a climate more conducive to attracting investments to the region, encouraging and promoting economic growth throughout the region. They underlined the importance of concluding agreements in the fields of protection and encouragement of investments and prevention of double taxation among the countries of the region.

The Ministers called for the international financial institutions, the EU and individual countries with a considerable investment potential to take part in this process through joint initiatives including economic conferences, business forums, etc.

Protection of the environment

The Ministers confirmed the necessity of promoting regional cooperation in the environmental protection on the basis of bilateral and multilateral instruments as well as the Declaration of the Ministers of environment from the region of the ECE, adopted by the Third Ministerial Conference on "Environment for Europe" of October 1995. The need for common endeavours was noted with regard to the transboundary impact of air pollution and the effects of industrial and nuclear accidents as well as transshipment of hazardous wastes. In this respect the importance of assessing the transboundary environmental impact was emphasized.

In this context the Ministers called on the international financial institutions, G-24 and other relevant international organizations to support initiatives and projects of the countries in the area.

PROMOTION OF HUMANITARIAN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COOPERATION

The Ministers expressed their conviction that the protection of human rights and the promotion of free personal and professional contacts, represent an essential element for lasting stability and a climate of confidence in the region.

The Ministers stated their readiness for the promotion of social and cultural cooperation, for widening the scope for humanitarian cooperation and personal human contacts on the basis of their international obligations and universally recognized human rights and principles such as: freedom of travel for personal or professional reasons, free access to and dissemination of information, freedom of contacts on the basis of family ties, facilitating the reunification of divided families and promotion of free individual contacts in the field of science, culture, sports and tourism. Examining ways towards the elimination of visas in all South-Eastern European countries would be a positive step in this direction, taking into account their international obligations.

The Ministers recalled their statement in the Tirana Joint Communiqué that persons belonging to national minorities have the right, within the existing constitutional order of their country, which guarantees equal rights and status for all, to freely express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural,

linguistic and religious identity, and to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms in full equality with other citizens.

Desire was expressed for promoting and expanding the cultural, scientific and educational cooperation between the countries in south-eastern Europe and their institutions, competent in those spheres, not only in multilateral projects and initiatives within the region but also under the aegis of intergovernmental organizations in the spherer of culture, science and education.

Particular interest was expressed in the various forms of exchange in the areas of the arts and education.

The Ministers underlined the importance of youth exchange as well as the development of direct contacts between cultural, scientific and educational institutions and the setting up of networks for cooperation in specific fields.

The respect for the cultural heritage and the exchange of information on the illicit traffic of objects of cultural value were also taken into consideration.

The important role of the mass media for overcoming the negative stereotypes of the past, for free flow of information and for better mutual acquaintance with the cultural diversity of the region was underlined.

The Ministers agreed to encourage the involvement of non-governmental organizations and unions on the basis of professional, cultural and scientific interest into this process with the participation of representatives of all countries of the region.

ILLICIT DRUG AND ARMS TRAFFICKING AND COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF JUSTICE, COMBAT OF ORGANIZED CRIME, ELIMINATION OF TERRORISM

The Ministers stressed the need for closer cooperation in the field of justice, combat of organized crime, illicit drug and arms trafficking and elimination of terrorism. They agreed to elaborate a regional programme which will complement national efforts in this respect.

This programme should envisage, inter alia, the accession of all countries of the region to the relevant international conventions and their effective implementation; exchange of information on the legislation of the countries and the changes taking place in them; creation of modalities between the competent institutions for a quick response to requests for legal assistance.

The Ministers expressed their condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism, regardless of their motivation, in all its forms and manifestations and pointed out the need to take all necessary and effective measures, in accordance with relevant provisions of international law and international standards of human rights.

The Ministers underlined the importance of strengthening border controls and called for joint action against illegal and irregular migration. They proposed a semestrial review of the cooperation in this field. They encouraged the conclusion between States of the region of agreements concerning the readmission of persons, illegally residing in each State's territory.

A common concern was expressed with regard to the proliferation of drug-related criminal activities adversely affecting the countries of the Balkan region. A regional conference on combating the illicit cultivation, production, processing, trafficking, trade and use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances was proposed as a starting-point for a more comprehensive cooperation among the participating countries and with the involvement of the relevant international bodies and programmes such as the United Nations International Drug Control, the relevant Poland and Hungary Assistance for Economic Restructuring (PHARE) programmes and the Council of Europe Pompidou Group.

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The Ministers expressed their belief that the above agreements shall contribute to the overall objective of stability, security and cooperation in Europe. They are convinced that they are in consonance with the EU Platform for action and the Royaumont process and accordingly expect that they will be fully supported by the European Union.

The Ministers expressed satisfaction with the results achieved and constructive spirit of their meeting. They shared the view that this represents a new beginning of multilateral regional cooperation. With that in view the Ministers decided to hold a meeting of their representatives in Sofia to examine the proposals presented during their meeting as well as to coordinate future action. It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe in 1997 in Greece.

Sofia, 7 July 1996

ANNEX II

Address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, H.E. Mr. Jean Videnov, to the participants in the meeting

May I express the gratitude of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria for the support rendered by the States and international organizations and institutions that you represent to our initiative to launch a new all-out process of stability, security and cooperation in South-Eastern Europe.

The conference which Bulgaria hosts became possible owing to the joint constructive efforts of the countries of the region; these efforts received the wide support of the international community, among others. It is an expression of the political will to open up new prospects to strengthen regional stability, security and cooperation along the lines of good-neighbourliness. We hope the Sofia conference in compliance with the European criteria and standards will test a new approach, namely the pooling of the countries' efforts for the implementation of economically significant projects in the area of infrastructure. It will be an omission if I fail to underline our ambition to give a further impulse to the peace process on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In short, the purpose of this conference as we see it is to outline the ways and actions to establish a new process of multilateral cooperation in the region of South-Eastern Europe with the involvement of all countries.

The Government of the Republic of Bulgaria believes, and I am sure the belief is shared by all of us, that the stability, security and cooperation among us should be in the foreground, and that naturally, we should take specific actions for our common interests and for what we have in common to materialize. This is the shortest way to find a deserving place in united Europe to which we aspire.

The Republic of Bulgaria has always been an adherent to a constructive and good-willed approach in the State-to-State relations. Bulgaria was and will be in favour of the promotion of good-neighbourliness and cooperation and finding a peaceful, just and lasting solution to all disputes. Guided by this principle-abiding position, throughout the Yugoslav conflict our country was consistently pursuing a line of refraining and non-interference, placing all parties involved in the conflict on a par, a parallel approach to the lifting of the economic sanctions regime along with progress made in the peaceful settlement. That policy of our country was one of the essential stabilizing factors in the region and received recognition of the international community. However, the cost was particularly high in the hard period of transition we are going through.

We count on the solidarity and support of the international community which is able and I believe, willing, to help not just in the economic reconstruction and development of the countries that were directly involved in the conflict but also to assist the countries that sustained an equally heavy burden which was not their fault. It will be difficult to achieve the general stabilization of the situation in the region and the establishment of good-neighbourliness and cooperation in State-to-State relations bilaterally and multilaterally that we

and all of Europe seek unless there is economic stability and viable and prospering market economy in all Balkan countries.

The full peace implementation of Bosnia and Herzegovina would create preconditions to stabilize the situation in the conflict-hit regions and even farther. It would open up prospects on the basis of the combined efforts of the international community and of the countries of the region to overcome the recurrences of chronic instability in the Balkans and make the Balkans a region of real possibilities and prospects of fruitful and mutually advantageous cooperation. From this viewpoint it is particularly important to give support to the ongoing process of the complete normalization between the States, emerging after the collapse of the former Yugoslavia.

The new situation in Europe freed of the spirit of confrontation and division creates even broader opportunities for the development of multilateral regional cooperation. This new situation gives rise to the hope that we are not far from the day when each country in the region will see its neighbour first and foremost as a partner. I think this conference corresponds completely to this aspiration and hope. Moreover, multilateral cooperation in the Balkans has history and traditions. In the course of decades the States of this region promoted State-to-State cooperation on a bilateral and multilateral basis. There were two meetings of the Balkan countries' Ministers for Foreign Affairs: in 1988 in Belgrade and in 1990 in Tirana. The joint communiqués that they adopted contain specific agreements on joint action in the political, economic, cultural and humanitarian areas. Steady dialogue was maintained on a wide range of problems of common interest. No doubt it had an exceptionally important role in the maintenance of political stability in the region at a good level.

The idea of seeking common interests and points of contacts in the implementation of large-scale projects - cross-border cooperation and communication infrastructure - is exceptionally topical today. Within a year alone Sofia was the venue of highly representative international meetings on trans-European infrastructure and telecommunications. The Balkan Energy Centre is already operating. The Ministers of Transport are to meet in November 1996.

The humanitarian, social and cultural component of interrelations is not the least. Regardless of the existence of serious problems we believe there exists significant communication potential which can play a stabilizing role in the region.

We are satisfied that Sofia was chosen to be the venue of the next meeting of the Defence Ministers on strengthening security and confidence in the Balkans.

By intention and nature the regional forms of cooperation in the Balkans are called to additionally strengthen and diversify integration processes in Europe. In this context the States of South-Eastern Europe have an interest not to set up an isolated club but be open and create and expand and, naturally, use the potential of cooperation in various areas with other regional and pan-European structures. Our position, which I believe is shared by other States in the region is that multilateral cooperation can and must develop as part of pan-European integration processes. The European target of regional

cooperation only emphasizes its open nature. This target presupposes cooperation with adjoining regions and with leading world and European political and economic factors alike.

The Bulgarian Government hopes that the outset of an all-out process of multilateral cooperation in south-eastern Europe will have a powerful positive impact to overcome the negative idea of the region as a zone of insecurity and conflicts, a zone substantially falling short of European criteria of democratic and stable development. I would like to reiterate that we will count on the active support of international institutions and countries outside this region.

We have reasons to count on such a support. The result of the last meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Union and of the associated countries in Florence clearly and unambiguously determine the development of the regional forms of cooperation as a step towards the building of a united Europe. This is why this conference alike is an open initiative with special representative international participation which we welcome.

While I stress the need for the promotion of multilateral cooperation, I would not belittle the potential and prospects for the promotion of bilateral relations. These two forms are not in contradiction, they complement and enrich each other.

States in the region will only stand to gain if they approach the solution of the problems with pragmatism, good will and common sense, if they avoid differences and disputes and stake on the community of interests rather. It is true the problems left over from the past are not few, nor are they easy to solve. But it is also true that the Balkan nations have many values, history and culture in common. The Balkans are one of the cradles of European and world civilization; democracy was born here in antiquity. Other regions became within a short time an example of rapid development and a paragon of civilized State-to-State relations. Let us follow them. Together let us change the stereotypes which attach the attributes difficulty, risk and conflict to our region. Multilateral cooperation will help us in this respect and provide further possibilities for development prosperity, security, stability, confidence and respect.

We do believe that despite the difficulties the goals we set are realistic and feasible. The wishes for success, the solidarity of our friends in other parts of Europe, the United States of America and the Russian Federation and the opportunities afforded by the fact that the starting process is in consonance with the present lasting interests of the Balkan countries are the guarantees. Together we can and must use them.

Sofia, 6 July 1996

ANNEX III

Chairman's summary

On 6 and 7 July 1996, a Conference on Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe was held in Sofia.

A thorough exchange of views was held, with the participation of Ministers and heads of delegations from countries of the region, the High Representative, representatives of interested countries and international institutions. It focused on security and cooperation in South-Eastern Europe, the interaction between different regionally oriented initiatives and the impact of regional cooperation on peace implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A common view was shared that the initiative to convene the Sofia meeting was a timely one and of particular significance since it originates from the region, with substantial potential for improving regional stability, increasing economic prosperity and enhancing overall integration with European institutions and organizations. It was stressed that efforts should focus on issues that bring countries together and do not set them apart, drawing on the historic lesson of Europe on achieving greater security and stability through cooperation and integration.

The participants pointed out that the meeting contributes to mutually complement and reinforce different regionally oriented initiatives, especially the common platform of EU and the South-East European Cooperative initiative of the United States Government. They noted that the processes initiated in Royaumont and Sofia are now at a stage when projects need to be identified, endorsed and supported. Readiness to develop cooperation on matters of common interest with the countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative was expressed.

It was stated that healing the wounds in Bosnia and Herzegovina shall bring the region together. The importance of reconciliation and reconstruction was particularly stressed. The countries of the region have the potential to contribute to economic reconstruction through appropriate arrangements. The participants reiterated their support to the activities of the High Representative.

The regional dimension was recognized as a key element for a return of all States to stability and prosperity. Democratic security, mature democratic institutions and respect for human rights are major factors enhancing development and social cohesion. A number of delegations noted that the full reintegration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the international community is of vital importance for lasting stability and cooperation in the region. One delegation pointed out that further steps are still needed to achieve this reintegration.

All participants stressed their firm commitment to contribute to the success of the process initiated in Sofia providing multilateral forms of cooperation in the following areas: enhancing good-neighbourly relations

including confidence- and security-building measures; development of economic cooperation through cross-border cooperation, upgrading transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructures, trade and investment promotion: development of humanitarian, social and cultural contacts; cooperation in the field of justice, combat of organized crime, illicit drug and arms trafficking; and elimination of terrorism.

The Ministers agreed that the concrete ideas and proposals which were submitted to the meeting will be duly examined at a meeting of their representatives in Sofia.

All participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of Bulgaria for launching the initiative and organizing the meeting.

It was agreed to hold the next Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Countries of South-Eastern Europe in 1997 in Greece.

Sofia, 7 July 1996